

Nomination of a Conservation Management Plan for South American population of Southern Right Whales (*Eubalaena australis*)



This Nomination was prepared by Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Peru

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Introduction

The Southern right whale, *Eubalaena australis*, (Desmoulins, 1822) is distributed down to 18°S (de Oliveira Santos et al., 2001) with wintering concentrations in southern Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, Tristan da Cunha, Namibia, southern Mozambique, South Africa, Island St. Paul, southwest and southeast of Australia, New Zealand sub Antarctic islands, Kemadec Islands and Chile (Rice, 1998). The winter nursery grounds of the southwestern Atlantic are very well known from studies carried out since the 1970's in Península Valdés, Argentina (Payne et al., 1983; Payne, 1986) and Santa Catarina, Brazil (Groch et al., 2005). The Peninsula Valdes population was increasing at a rate of approximately 6.8% from the early 1970s to 2000 (Cooke et al. 2001, 2003) and it may now number around 6,100 whales (Rowntree pers. comm.). By contrast, the southern right whales from Chile and Peru, are estimated to number less than 50 mature whales (IWC/62/Rep 4).

Small numbers of strandings have been recorded in the Peninsula Valdes region since 1971. However, since 2003, when the Southern Right Whale Health Monitoring program (SRWHMP) was established, a total of 366 right whale deaths have been recorded, with peaks in 2003 (31), 2005 (47), 2007 (83), 2008 (95) and 2009 (79). A continuation in this high mortality rate would likely result in a population decline. In 2010 a workshop met in Puerto Madryn, Argentina to investigate the causes of this high mortality of southern right whales. Over 90% of the deaths have been of first-year calves. After investigating thoroughly a range of possible causes, the workshop agreed three leading hypotheses because it was not possible to determine which was most likely and some combination of factors may have occurred, at least in some years: (1) reduced food availability for adult females; (2) biotoxins; and (3) infectious disease.

Southern right whales were classified as “Least Concern” but the Peru-Chile subpopulation was classified as “Critically Endangered” by IUCN (Reilly et al, 2008).

Considering the critical situation of southern right whales from Peru and Chile and the high and the unusual and unsustainable mortality rate of the Argentinean population, the IWC recognized the merits of developing a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for the South American populations of southern right whales at IWC 62. The discussions at IWC62 effectively replicate the approval process for the development of a CMP.

Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Peru and Uruguay will submit a draft CMP nomination at IWC 63. The development of the CMP will link directly to the Comprehensive Assessment review meeting of Southern Right Whales, which will be held at Puerto Madryn, Argentina from 13rd to 16th September 2011 (IWC, 2010). In order to incorporate significant existing and /or emerging threats in the preparation of the CMP of South American Southern Right Whales, a drafting group will be established and meet right after the Puerto Madryn meeting to prepare the draft of the CMP to be submitted to the IWC 64. Each range state will designate one expert to be part of the drafting group. Funding will be sought from the IWC CMP fund to support a coordinator to develop and implement the Plan.

Literature cited

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Timeframe

	2011				2012					
	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
SRW workshop	X									
Develop CMP		X								
Submission draft CMP to IWC							X			
64 IWC										X

Breakdown budget

Items		US\$
<i>Airfares</i>		
Argentina	US\$400 x 2 airfares	800
Brazil	US\$1110 x 2 airfares	2,220
Chile	US\$630 x 2 airfares	1,260
Peru	US\$1151 x 1 airfare	1,151
Uruguay	US\$405 x 1 airfare	405
USA	US\$1500 x 1 airfare	1,500
<i>Subtotal</i>		7,336
<i>Daily expenses for 10 participants</i>	x US\$ 160 x 2 days x 10 part.	3,200
<i>Coordination until IWC 64</i>		4,000
TOTAL		14,536

Total amount requested: US Dollar Fourteen Thousand Five Hundred Thirty Six.